

The UNIVERSAL
CRITERION,

Establish'd on a

PENALTY,

And apply'd to the

Grand Question.

L O N D O N:

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AN
ANSWER
TO A
LETTER,

CONTAINING
REMARKS on a Book entitled,
*The Infallibility of human
Judgment.*

To Mr. S. B.

I Can't help confessing that I am glad of
an Opportunity of declaring the great E-
steem I have for your Friendship as well
as Judgment in Matters of this nature, yet the
Necessity of the Circumstance hath made it lit-

tle more than a Compliment, to tell you so here, because I was oblig'd, if I answer'd it at all, to convey it by your Means to Mr. C——, having receiv'd his from your Hands; and as to its being in Print, it is, because so many of my Friends and Acquaintance, who know of it, desire Copies, whom it is not practicable to gratify otherwise: However I do not design to publish it, and don't doubt but to take effectual care that no Bookseller shall; and the Reason is, I am resolv'd, since I have seen it proper to undertake it, to give my self full Liberty to finish the Argument, and put it past any further Dispute or Objection. But I have no such Fondness for any thing I can do, as to prefer it to the Regard I have for the Tranquillity of Mankind. I know it will choque some People surprisngly *, and I think it imprudent, nay even wicked, to make such sudden and violent Attacks on the Peace of Peoples Minds. I shall therefore take Care to keep it from those who are not in some measure prepar'd for it.

The Method here taken might not perhaps be approv'd on by many curious and judicious Persons, but I dare say they will excuse it, when they consider that I have an End in View of establishing this Principle in those who profess

* See *Infal. of Hum. Judgm.* page 100, 107, 208, 242.

it; explaining it where they seem not thoroughly to understand it, and let others see that it is very consistent and conducive to the best Morality as well as Religion; and also practical, since a very considerable Body of virtuous good People are establish'd, directed and regulated by it.

I know very well that the Generality of them do not see it in all its other Appearances, nor know it by its other Denominations; but how small a Part of any who call themselves a Church, understand what they pretend to profess? It is enough for me that in Religion and Morality, which is as far as they are concern'd as a Body, they are determin'd by it. My Antagonist was excited to this by a very eminent noble Person, as I am inform'd: He himself is a Man of Parts and Sincerity, and of Note too, and professes himself a Quaker (tho' I think he is a little too much in Love with what is call'd Mystick Divinity to be consistent with their Principles); if therefore I write to them, it is to them I am principally to be *agreeable*, as well as *intelligible*, if I hope for Success.

In his * Letter, Page 6th, is this remarkable Paragraph. "But nothing can more clearly demonstrate this Difference between carnal

* Mr. C——'s.

" Reason, and Reason illuminated by Faith,
 " than that great Instance of *Abraham's* Obe-
 " dience to the Command of God, to offer
 " up his Son; for if he had form'd his Judg-
 " ment according to carnal Reason, he must (in
 " this Author's way) first have receiv'd the Com-
 " mand in his Apprehension, and then when he
 " had brought it to his Judgment, he might
 " very naturally have reason'd, that to slay his
 " own Son would be a wicked, barbarous, in-
 " human, cruel and murderous Action, and
 " therefore could not be the Command of God,
 " because it could never be agreeable to his
 " Wisdom, Justice and Goodness; nay was con-
 " trary to the Truth of his own Promise con-
 " cerning this very Son; from whence he might
 " very reasonably have concluded that this must
 " be some diabolical Delusion or horrid Tem-
 " ptation; and so his WILL might have resolv'd
 " never to obey it; and I do not suppose that
 " our Author himself can imagine, that any,
 " even the most virtuous moral Man could
 " have argued and resolv'd otherwise from the
 " Principles of human unilluminated Reason.

Thus far Mr. C——'s Letter: These are
 his very Words, all of them as they follow
 one another, and are literally transcrib'd; and
 it appears to me, as great a Miracle as ever was
 produc'd for the frightening People out of their
 Reason and common Sense, That a Man can
 be so perfectly sound in Mind and in his Senses,
 and go so far and not see quite through the
 Fallacy.

Fallacy. He is very much in the right indeed when he says, The Author of the *Infallibility of human Judgment* can't imagine that any, even the most virtuous and moral Man, could have argued or resolv'd otherwise; one would be almost ready to think this Gentleman could not be serious, but had a Mind to divert himself and us.

However supposing him serious, and that it is his taking it for granted, that Reason must be illuminated by Faith, hath dazled the Eyes of his Understanding, that he can't see Truth in plain Day-light, when it stands directly before him: Tho' all that can be meant here by *Reason being illuminated by Faith*, can be no more than saying we must have *Faith* in a Thing, or *believe* it with Reason or against Reason, that is, right or wrong, true or false. We shall soon see of what good or bad Use this Word *Faith* is, and whether what he here calls *Faith*, and says illuminates *Reason*, is a celestial Light, or an infernal Will-with-a-wisp.

We have no other Faculties to understand any thing by, or to distinguish one thing from another, but this *natural Apprehension*, and the *natural Faculty of judging*, which are both involuntary; and our Antagonist hath justly shewn how these have seen and determin'd it: And the CRITERION OF TRUTH may from thence be thus form'd and applied:

*The Criterion
of Truth.*

To say a Thing is what it is, and what it appears to be to our own *Apprehension* and *Judgment*, and to the *Apprehension* and *Judgment* of all Mankind, is to SPEAK TRUTH.

To say a Thing is not what it is, nor what it appears to be to universal *Apprehension*, and to contradict the Testimony of our own natural *Judgments*, and the *Judgments* of every body else, is TELLING A LYE.

If we have any Meaning adapted to those Words *Truth* and *Lye*, it is this and no other. I therefore desire a clear and direct Answer to this Question,

*The Que-
stion.*

Whether a Man that speaks according as his own *Apprehension* and the *Apprehension* of all Mankind hath seen of this Case, and according as his own *natural Judgment* and the *Judgment* of all Mankind determines on this Case, in saying the Proposal to *Abraham* to sacrifice his Son, is the Proposal of an inhuman, barbarous and cruel Action?
Doth

Doth the Man that speaks thus of this
Case speak Truth or Falshood?

Observe here the invincible Force of this CRITERION; it is an irresistible Law, executing it self, and inflicting a Penalty of Scandal and Ignominy on the Offender; and we are even with those who would impose penal Laws against it; for whoever refuses the *Criterion*, or pretends to argue against the evident Determination of it, when it is thus rightly applied, and the Question brought before it, must be cover'd with Shame, being in his own Conscience condemn'd, and that Conscience confess'd and open to the View of all who hear him; so that he stands detected and expos'd like a Man in the Pillory for Crimes of the like nature.

So potent, so universal, so satisfactory, so easy and ready is the way of attaining Truth! How surprising is the Stupidity of Mankind to be blind to the clear Light of their Reason! How ungrateful to the Author of our Constitution, who hath thus perfectly made us! But Men will find out Inventions of their own, to amend and better what is already so exquisitely finish'd: Reason in their Opinion is too dark, and we must look for artificial Means of illuminating it; but how just are the Confusions and other miserable Consequences of this presumptuous Impiety!

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What

What can be said in Defence of this which People call *Faith*, and pretend it illuminates their Reason? If it leads from Truth, we can't say it is a celestial Light; and if no better Use nor Meaning is to be found in these ‡ Words *Faith* and *Believe*, we shall have little Reason to repent our throwing them out of philosophical Arguments; much rather wish it was practicable to throw them out of Conversation, since such palpable Error and Confusion is the Consequence.

Remark here, we have not in Words declar'd on which Side the Case will be determin'd; therefore if any Person hath read thus far, and still continues our Antagonist, let him stop before he goes any further to consider the Question, and ANSWER IT AS HE DURST, and as he values his Reputation for Sense and Honesty.

It is also acknowledg'd that a virtuous moral Man (but indeed we must suppose he means one no more than *naturally* or *carnally*, as they call it, virtuous and moral) by this way of reasoning, will conclude it is not the Command of God, because he hath discover'd by his Apprehension and Judgment that it is disagreeable to Wisdom, Justice and Goodness.

‡ See *Infal. hum. Judgm.* page 74.

And here again he is very right, though he can't see it; for this, tho' it cannot be applied to all Cases as the former, yet is as universal and just a Criterion to try all Things, where God and Religion is the Case; for we have no Notion of God at all but by seeing that our selves and every thing else are made justly, wisely, perfectly, &c. And whoever pretends to use the Monosyllable God, and doth not mean by it a *Being*, with all these Attributes according to the most usual and common Application and Signification of the Words, hath no more Meaning in pronouncing the Word God than a Parrot, and is indeed an Atheist, without any Knowledge at all of the Author of his own Being and the Universe.

Now the Argument is here finish'd; for after a Case is reduc'd to a self-evident Proposition, agreeable to the universal Reason of Mankind; if a Man pretends still to argue, he only shews that he is either not right and sound in his Mind, or hath not yet arriv'd to perfectly Understanding, because he hath not attain'd to the Knowledge of the right Use of his rational Faculties: For if a Man under Pretence of being determin'd by *Miracles*, *Authenticities* and *Faith*, talks of Things inconsistent with the *irrefragable Laws of Nature*, the *eternal and unalterable Distinction of Things*, and against *universal common Sense*; if he be sincere, and as yet hath not got over the Prejudices of Education, and knows no better; if he is

of a docil Disposition, he may and ought to be taught, but he is no Antagonist to be argued with. To multiply more Words would only perplex the Case which is now clear, and a Man's own Reflections will in a little time convict him. In the mean while he may help himself by debating in his own Mind, and examining how he receiv'd this History, and from whom? If the Story is truly related? How and by what Authority it came to be forc'd upon us? How we know it to be sacred? By what Means this Author or his *Abraham* knew this was God's Command; whether the Voice of God is to be distinguish'd as one Man's from another's, or his Person?

When he comes to consider these Things he will find that no such Revelation as this is possible, because it is not possible either to *know* it, *prove* it, or *put it in practice*.

Here is a Thing propos'd, detrimental to human Society, and the whole Community or Nation, in which a Man lives, must be satisfy'd of it; but which way can this be done?

If the most venerable Person now living, and even suppose him to have had ninety nine good and true Revelations, and that this was the hundredth: Those ninety nine were known to be good and true, only as they foretold some Things which succeeded accordingly, or directed him to something not detrimental to the Good
and

and Benefit of Mankind; but this hundredth is apparently detrimental, and all Mortals are liable to mortal Accidents, such as hypochondriac Distempers, Delusions, &c. If therefore the wisest best good Man in the Nation was to say he had a supernatural Revelation to kill an innocent Man, whether his own Son or another: Such wise Man's Friends, notwithstanding the Veneration and Esteem they had for him, would, if they found him insist on it, recommend him to the Care of a Physician.

A Miracle, tho' never so surprising, could avail nothing in this Case: The raising of the Dead could not prove it came from God; for the Witch of *Endor* rais'd *Samuel*: Nor could a Voice in Thunder from the Clouds; for the Devil is the Prince of the Power of the Air: And in *1 Kings* xxii. an evil Spirit is said to be sent into *Abab's* Prophets, to persuade him, under Pretence of divine Revelation to LIE to him, in order to betray him to his Destruction.

When my Antagonist hath consider'd this well, I doubt not but he will be somewhat elevated with the Contemplation of that infinite Wisdom, who hath so perfectly form'd us, and given us Reason. This involuntary Judgment, how evidently doth it here shew it self in this present Case to be the Spirit of Truth, which is for ever discovering Error, and dispelling Darkness! All the Authorities of seeming great Men, Books, Miracles and Wonders that are
really

really or feignedly wrought, can have no Effect to obstruct this divine Beam of Light; it *will* shew Things as they are: So irresistible is its Power, that our own Actions are approv'd or censur'd by it; too many of them are the Distates of our Appetites and Wills, but they are justified or condemn'd according to their real Goodness or Badness by this INWARD LIGHT, which in this View and Operation of it we call CONSCIENCE. When we meditate on the Ingenuity of our own Frame and Constitution, and of the World and all the Objects around us, and find that an *infinitely wise Agent* form'd them, we then call this Faculty LIGHT OF NATURE; and when we have discover'd by this *Light of Nature* a supreme great Mind and Author of all Things, we find that all his Works and Productions are perform'd by this ETERNAL REASON OF THINGS, and his own Actions are determin'd by it.

How mean is it, after these glorious and real beneficial Views of REASON, to stoop so low as to bestow a Thought on *Belief*, that vile Device of wicked mercenary tyrannical Men, to debauch and degenerate the human Mind, and enslave the whole Species! These by teaching some Morality, give a Sanction to Fables, and a Veneration to themselves, and thus steal imperceptibly on unwary People; and then *Faith*, by which is meant *Faith*, or a Reliance on them and their Doctrines and Interpretations is substituted in the room of the divine Light of Reason.

And

And this is the dark and black Artifice, the true *carnal unnatural Reason* that is set to oppose and obscure the bright Rays of the Spirit of Truth.

But the Offence which Mr. C—— takes to the Treatise, is rather a more latent Uneasiness in behalf of the Quakers, being afraid that we are explaining away those pleasing and useful Consolations they find in their contemplating Extasies, and which they say they are excited to by this same divine Spirit; and it is this causeless Fear gives some a secret Pain, and makes them bestow a great deal of Labour to be inconsistent with themselves by opposing Things, that, when truly understood, do not oppose them: But we shall soon see that he is entirely mistaken for want of attending to what he hath or may read; for there is nothing, even of that innocent and beneficial Enthusiasm lost; for only transiently to mention that a good and pious Man, having no Vices or Immoralities to weigh him down, may soar up to most delightful Passions from his own natural and rational Reflections and Meditations: But we have gone further than this, and if he had at all heeded the Treatise he complains on, he would have found † in several Places some real Phenomena shew'd of the like nature, and demonstrating the phi-

† Page 49, 80. All the 6th Chapter of the Supplement, p. 23.

Iosophical Probability, that the Mind of Man may have *Communications with, Notices and Incitements from*, other intellectual spiritual Agents: But as these spiritual intellectual Agents may be good or bad, so it is by them admitted that the Contemplations and Actions thus excited may be good or bad. There is therefore as much Necessity for the afore-describ'd inward Light of Truth, to witness to the Goodness or Badness of the real or pretended Inspirations, as to any thing else.

And so far do I take my self from differing from them, that I know it to be a Mistake in Fact; for it is their Practice to try even those who pretend to Inspiration among themselves by this very universal inward Light; and according as that bears its Testimony, they do approve or disapprove, admonish, correct, and even entirely suppress some.

So that they themselves do make a Distinction betwixt *the Inspiration*, and *that* by which they *judge* of the Inspiration of its Goodness or Badness, or Reality.

And it is Want of observing with Attention this Distinction, which makes Mr. C—— and some others think Rationalists differ from them, when indeed there is no such Difference.

For who would go about to dispute the Reality of the Inspiration, when the very Nature
and

and Constitution of the human Mind in a strict philosophical Examination admits of it? especially (I repeat) to dispute it with those who have such an unquestionable Guide to judge it by, as will suffer no Error detrimental to human Happiness to escape its Censure? and I am sure he is no wise Man who will dare to be offended with true Religion and Devotion rightly turn'd to its proper Object, and so much for the Improvement and Benefit of Mankind.

The only Principle on which they build, as describ'd by Mr. *Barclay*, and admitted by them all, is that there is an *inward Light*, a divine *Spirit of Truth*, which shews us Truth from Error, Delusion from true Revelation; that nothing is good, tho' handed down to us with never such plausible Pretences, if this *Light* doth not witness to it; that the Scripture its self is a dead Letter without this; that the Whole and the Parts thereof are viewed by this; the Interpolations, Additions, Alterations, false Translations, erroneous Transcriptions are consider'd, and the Goodness of it admitted only to be good as this *divine Spirit* within them beareth Testimony of the Goodness. They also say, that every Man in the World from the Beginning before Christianity, as well as since, and in all Parts of the World, as well where Christianity is, as where it is not, have this *inward Light*: That it is sufficient to guide Men in all religious and moral Duties that God or Man can be suppos'd to require of them: That
every

every one hath it, if they will exert it, or rather permit it to exert it self; but a Man may refuse to observe the Dictates of it, and it may be so far stifled by an Habit of Wickedness, and by giving way to Errors that are in direct Opposition to it, that it may be scarce discernible.

Now every Title of this must be admitted as just and true; and even the very Terms which they seem to delight in as its Denominations, are most proper and adequate Terms to express it by when consider'd and applied on this manner.

And all I can find I have been doing on, if they would diligently consider it again, is to explain this inward Light, to prove the Universality, the Purity, Sanctity and Force of it, the Manner of applying it, or in their Phrase, the way of observing its Dictates and Operations: To shew it, is no wild enthusiastick Chimæra, but a Reality, an Image of the divine Fountain of all Truth stamp'd and fix'd in the Constitution of the human Mind.

And as they impose no Creeds, Articles or other Authorities, nor require any thing but a Submission to this Principle; I think my self too much interested to proceed in the Commendation of the People professing it, for fear of being suspected of Partiality and Flattery: Yet I can't help here referring to a Letter wrote
by

by one who can by no means be liable to Suspicion of such Partiality: I mean that sign'd *Diogenes*, publish'd in the *British Journal*, Apr. 13, 1723. on the Subject of Enthusiasm, where besides a great deal more which he hath most justly said, demonstrating his Value for it, he concludes to this Purpose, "That Mr. *Barclay's* System is the most beneficent in the World, comprehends every thing which hath been said by the best Writers for Liberty of Conscience, and against all religious Impositions; and this he hath done with as much Wit, happy Turn, and Mastery of Expression, as is consistent with the Plainness and Simplicity affected by those of his Sect, who Page 1. he says, are perhaps the only Party among Men whose Practices as a Body correspond with their Principles.

But I perceive there are still some Mistakes between us by misunderstanding and misapplying the Word *Reason*, as Mr. C—— often calls the whole of the Understanding *Reason*; at other times talks of *Reason*, when nothing is meant but *Ratiocination*, *Reasoning*, or *Argumentation*, &c. I shall therefore here give an Explication of it, which perhaps will please those who have a philosophical Taste, better than any I have hitherto done.

By *Judgment* then I mean A PASSIVE PERCEPTION OF THE RELATION OF THINGS, that is, an involuntary Determination of the *Equality*

lity or *Inequality*, the *Fitness* or *Unfitness*, which is to say the *Goodness* or *Badness*, *Beauty* or *Deformity* of Things with one another; and this is the NATURAL JUDGMENT; and therefore I would choose for the most part the Word *Judgment* to express it by, and apply it only to this *Perception of the Relation of Things*, excluding it from all other Uses, thereby to accustom our selves to a clear and intelligible Method of conceiving and delivering to others our distinct and separate Ideas.

Now this *Perception* is thus brought about; we see, for Example, two Sticks, one three Feet long, the other four; this is the first and *simple Perception*, and therefore I call this *Perception* of the two Objects without considering their Relation; PERCEPTION OR APPREHENSION. Then immediately follows the *Perception of their Relation* which they have to one another, which is that they are one longer than the other, and this I call *Judgment*, because it is an involuntary Determination, that they are unequal.

So in a moral Case, for Example, a Man sees his Neighbour's beautiful Wife, and his own Appetite of enjoying her; but when he views both together again, he perceives at the same instantaneous View which the very Word Wife excites in him, that her being so will require a Necessity of his being stronger or more cunning than her or her Husband, because he thinks
of

of doing somewhat which he would not suffer should be done to himself; and this immediately shews him the *Inequality* of it to his own and his Neighbour's Peace; that is its *Unfitness*, its *Deformity*; and this is his natural *Perception of the Relation of the Things*, that is his *involuntary Judgment*, let his Actions be what they will, either consonant or dissonant to it.

And notwithstanding we have thus clearly shew'd this Reason or Judgment to be natural to the Mind, yet have we lost nothing of that Divinity and Excellency which we ascrib'd to it before, and which excited our Admiration; for we are here considering an intelligent spiritual Agent, and not making such a Solecism in Speech as well as in Philosophy, as to think of *corporeal* or *material* PERCEPTION or WILL; and let those who charge us with Superstition, consider the Result which the most diligent Enquirer into the whole material System, (as well of the great World as its Epitome Man) and the Laws of their Motions, is come to in this Case: He discovers and demonstrates that
 " the † Organs of Sense are not for enabling
 " the Soul to PERCEIVE the Species of Things
 " in its Sensorium, but only for conveying them
 " there. The Senses do no more than CARRY
 " the Images of Things to our little Sensoriums,

† Sir Isaac Newton's Opticks, p. 379.

" which

“ which are there seen and beheld by that which
 “ in us perceives and thinks ;” * but that which
 thus *sees* and *beholds*, *perceives* and *thinks*, is
 still something else.

So the Body and its Members are wonderfully fitted for voluntary Motions, and when they are moved, it is according to certain mathematical and mechanical Laws and Forces. These are with a great deal of commendable Labour examin'd into and accounted for ; and these Discoveries are very admirable, curious and satisfactory : But what is this to the WILL and POWER that begins these Motions, and puts them to those Uses they are so well fitted for ?

And when we have finish'd all our anatomical, mathematical and mechanical Examination and Discoveries, and even our Expectations *Will* ; and *Perception* are not so much as trac'd ; nor indeed are they at all in any of the Processes of Enquiry, being entirely out of the material System.

There is a common Objection that we know not all the Properties and Modifications of Matter, and therefore we can't yet tell but what we call *Will* and *Perception*, may be Properties and Modifications of Matter not yet discover'd ; but this is trifling and against evident Phenomena and Fact, and appears to those who have been most industrious and most happy in

* Ibid. p. 344, 345.

discovering the Properties of Matter; those do only more and more find it to be incapable of having any Property or Modification, whereby it can begin its own Motions.

But I shall refer the Objectors to what hath been elsewhere said in the *Treatise; as also to the above quoted, most happy and successful Philosopher, Sir *Isaac Newton*, and also to follow his Advice in general, that is to consider ‡, "That the main Business of natural Philosophy is to argue from Phænomena, without feigning Hypotheses, and to deduce Causes from Effects, till we come to the very first Cause which certainly is not mechanical, and not only to unfold the Mechanism of the World, but chiefly to resolve those and such like Questions." Among which this before us is one.

Which if we do, and make no Conclusions but what are the Sum and Amount of certain universal Matters of Fact and Appearances to Sense; throw the Word *believe* entirely away, and express our selves in no other Terms but what shews the Degrees of Knowledge, which our involuntary Judgment directs us to; we need not fear being led into Superstition or Error.

• Infal. hum. Judgm.

‡ Opticks, p. 344.

Providence hath allotted to every Man something in which he may excell and be serviceable to the World ; the teaching Mankind the perfect Use of their Reason, hath fallen to my Lot, *unsought for* ; with what Imperfections as to Stile, Diction, and Particularities of my own I have gone through it, I know the Judicious will excuse (carping Criticks are to be despis'd:) I could have been glad to have done it without touching at all on Religion ; but it is *there* Mankind have undergone most Miseries for Want of it, and *there* it hath receiv'd most Abuses and Injuries: Here therefore the Attack must be made ; and it is here I hope we have conquer'd, and at length surmounted all Opposition, and establish'd it with a Force superior to that of any temporal Laws and their Penalties, and shew'd that the Infelicities and Degeneracies of Men are chiefly owing to themselves ; for there is a supream divine Reason, to whose Conduct if we submit, as to an able and infallible Charioteer, we shall be carried through all our Courses, whether corporeal or intellectual, to an happy Immortality in all the Meanings and Applications of the Word Immortal.

Pythagoras

F I N I S.